

2005
Annual Report
Cobb County Government



From the Chairman

Sam Olens
Chairman

Excellence is not just something we talk about in Cobb County ... we make it happen.

During the past year, our Public Safety Department became the first in the state to have its police department, fire department and 911 agency achieve national accreditation. This coveted triple crown is an achievement few communities in the nation accomplish.

Our Keep Cobb Beautiful program recently earned six awards from the national and state programs – including two first place affiliate awards. The state honored our Water System and the county as a WaterFirst community for our environmental stewardship efforts. These accolades and others illustrate how committed we are to quality in all our programs.

Through careful planning and protection of our greenspace, the Board

of Commissioners has worked consistently to protect our neighborhoods and preserve our excellent quality of life. Redevelopment has played an important role in revitalizing older neighborhoods and renovating vacant buildings. A great example is a recently remodeled west Cobb shopping center, which now houses the new West Park Government Center and provides much needed office space for county departments.



In South Cobb, we opened a beautiful new 20,000 square foot, state-of-the-art aquatic center. Located on South Cobb Drive alongside the South Cobb Recreation Center, the aquatic center is an important addition to the community and will provide both children and adults the opportunity for recreation and exercise.

None of these exciting projects would have been possible without the dedicated work of our outstanding county employees. Through their efforts, Cobb had another excellent year and we can look forward to many more.

Sam S. Olens

District Commissioners



We are looking forward to numerous projects to help improve District 1. The approval of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) by voters has opened the door for many transportation improvements. These projects were selected after we received practical and valuable advice from residents on how we could address their concerns. We will also continue our efforts to expand greenspace. For instance, the county recently aided the City of Kennesaw with the purchase of 13-acres on Pine Mountain Road to be made into a botanical garden. Together, we can build a tomorrow to be proud of.

Helen Goreham, *Commissioner, District 1*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen C. Goreham".



This past year was good for economic development in District 2. Many new projects were started. While the Cobb Energy Center for the Performing Arts will prove to be most attractive and enticing to tourism and local art enthusiasts, our district didn't stop there. We furthered the concept of live, work and play communities. We approved several impressive projects and developments in the Cumberland and Wildwood areas. While 2005 may be considered a year of great beginnings, 2006 will be considered a year of great completion. I look forward to the attractive future of District 2.

Joe L. Thompson, *Commissioner, District 2*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe L. Thompson".

Cobb County Government



Planning for the future continues to be our main focus. The Canton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners early during the past year and has already begun bearing results for our community. I am looking forward to seeing the results of the Senior Services 10-year Strategic Plan, which is expected to show how we can best serve our growing senior population. We will also see a successful conclusion to Cobb County's work with the Chamber of Commerce, as well as business and community leaders, on a "Cobb Roadmap" of community goals for the next 25 years.

Tim Lee, Commissioner, District 3

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Lee".



I am honored to serve District 4, bringing forth a vision for our community. This vision includes building a foundation to impact generations to come. We have seen numerous projects birthed this past year, including the South Cobb Recreation Aquatics Center and South Cobb Water Reclamation Facility. By creating partnerships with business, civic organizations and community leaders, a state-of-the-art playground was donated to the South Cobb Recreation Center in November, adding another place for youth to enjoy themselves. These and other developments are essential to continue improving our community.

Annette Kesting, Commissioner, District 4

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annette Kesting".

Community Improvement Projects

Building up

- Voters approved the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) in September. Years of needed transportation improvements and public safety necessities around Cobb County will now be funded by this one cent sales tax program largely supported by non-residents.

- A 15-member Citizens Oversight Committee was assembled by the Board of Commissioners to work with the County to review and prioritize proposed projects and ensure the integrity of the program. The committee selected its officers in November.

- The Georgia Department of Transportation agreed to commit an additional \$321 million for transportation projects in Cobb as part of SPLOST, bringing the total in federal and state money to \$475 million. As a result, the estimated cost per resident decreased to approximately 40 cents of every dollar spent.

- All of Cobb's cities will receive a portion of the funds which will be allocated according to population figures in the 2000 Census. This total is projected to be \$165,528,277.

Various projects are planned for funding under the SPLOST:

- A \$27 million replacement of the 800 MHz Communications System will provide direct radio connections between local, state and federal authorities. The updated all-digital system will improve the efficiency of emergency communications for Cobb and its cities.



- A \$110 million expansion of the Cobb County Adult Detention Center will add an additional 1,152 beds to meet current and future demands.

- A new \$55 million courthouse will combine all court services on the same campus and enable the Juvenile Court to relocate to the Marietta Square.

- Plans call for allocating more than \$325 million for relief from traffic congestion through improvements such as road widenings to increase capacity, traffic management technology upgrades and increased signal synchronization.

- More than \$267 million will be set aside for safety and operational improvements including intersection improvements, addition of

turn lanes, elimination of sight distance problems, widened lanes and shoulders and improvements in school zones.

■ We are planning to dedicate more than \$79 million towards infrastructure preservation, which includes work on roads, bridges and drainage. Improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist safety are expected to cost more than \$35 million, concentrated on sidewalk additions and multi-use trails.

■ The program will run from January 2006 until December 2011, funding improvements to help our community well beyond that time.

A complete list of projects and further details about spending under the program is available at the Web site cobbci.org.

Metro Area Sales Tax Comparison

Atlanta	8%
Fulton	7%
DeKalb	7%
Gwinnett	6%
COBB	6%

Cobb County's sales tax will be 6 percent effective Jan. 1, 2006

Sample Cobb Property Tax Bill

Homestead Exemptions:

\$10,000 County BOC / \$10,000 Schools / \$2,000 State

Based on residential home with market value of \$180,000

County Schools (BOE)	\$1,242.80
Maintenance & Operations	\$1,178.00
School Bond	\$64.80
County Government (BOC)	\$631.34
General Fund	\$424.70
Fire District	\$190.80
Debt Service	\$15.84
State Government	\$17.50
Governor's Tax Credit	-\$230.00
*TOTAL	\$1,661.64
(BOE) 66%	\$1,242.80
(BOC) 33%	\$631.34
(State) 1%	\$17.50
Governor's Tax Credit	-\$230.00
*TOTAL	\$1,661.64

Other exemptions include BOC Floating Homestead Exemption & BOE Exemption for homeowners over 62

Economy

■ The Cobb County Board of Commissioners led by example with the \$5.2 million purchase and redevelopment of a vacant shopping center. The center on Whitlock Avenue transformed into the West Park Government Center and will house multiple agencies, including the Cobb Police Crimes Against Children's Unit, the Board of Equalization, Tax Assessor's Office, Tax Commissioner's Office, Cobb Elections and Registration and SafePath Children's Advocacy Center.

■ The nation's top three credit rating agencies, Moody's, Standard and Poor's and Fitch IBCA, each gave Cobb County "Triple A" ratings for its general obligation bonds for the ninth year in a row. Only 20 out of 3,049 counties have this designation.

■ A \$300 million "live-work-play" community, currently under construction at the intersection of I-285 and Atlanta Road, will comprise approximately 60 acres and include condominiums, retail space, office space and single-family homes.

■ A long-awaited renovation to Cumberland Mall is now underway. This \$65 million renovation will consist of a complete refurbishment of the food court and the interior of the mall, as well as the demolition



Staying under budget

of the former Macy's to be replaced with an "open-air" lifestyle center that will include additional retail space and restaurants.

■ Community leaders broke ground on the new \$140 million Cobb Energy Center for the Performing Arts to be located on Akers Mill Road on the former site of Eastern Airlines corporate headquarters.

This facility is scheduled to open in 2007 and will be a welcome addition to the growing regional activity center at the intersection of Interstates 285 and 75.

■ The county increased its new grants revenue from \$10 million to \$26 million over the previous year. These grant dollars were a mix of supplemental funding from public safety grants for Homeland Security, Community Oriented Policing Grants for security technologies and various other funding sources to assist several departments.

■ The Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted the results of the Canton Road Corridor study in July, which recommended an assortment of transportation projects and land use improvements along a 4.5-mile section from the Sandy Plains Connector to the

Cherokee County border.

■ The planning process motivated the formation of the Canton Road Business Association – now with 150 members – that is earmarking \$30,000 to fund gateway markers on both ends of the corridor to demonstrate the progress of the area.

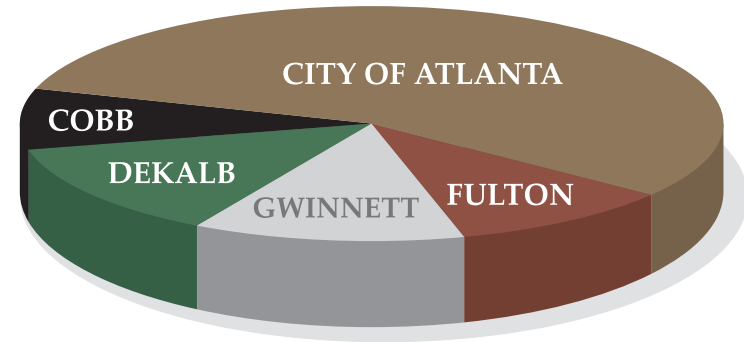
■ This past year, our premiere job training program, CobbWorks, oriented more than 2,000 persons to the Workforce Investment Act and other options. CobbWorks also awarded 125 individual training accounts, and served 492 youth in program activities.

Total Unincorporated Tax Millages

KEY	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05
Atlanta	20.71	23.67	22.83	21.67	21.21 ⁵
Fulton	18.04	17.28	16.63	16.38	16.37 ⁶
DeKalb	15.03	15.58	15.58	15.48	15.48 ⁰
Gwinnett	11.49	11.32	11.50	11.47	11.47 ⁰
COBB	9.72	9.72	9.72	9.72	9.72 ⁰

Figures are without school & state taxes (based on Financial Year)

Total Operating & Capital Budgets



COBB COUNTY	\$ 685,792,578
Fulton County	\$ 1,053,458,335
DeKalb County	\$ 1,338,212,652
Gwinnett County	\$ 1,503,376,900
City of Atlanta	\$ 6,808,262,438

Full-time Government Employees

Atlanta	8622
Fulton	6510
DeKalb	7466
Gwinnett	4391
COBB	4344

Cobb County figures = FY 06, other jurisdictions = FY 05

Services

Ready to work

■ Our employees helped run a shelter for Hurricane Katrina evacuees at Boots Ward Recreation Center in September. More than 190 people were housed at the center for two weeks. Employees assisted Red Cross volunteers in many ways, including installation of washers and dryers, cleaning and maintenance of the building and transportation of evacuees to medical treatment and other services.

■ When hundreds of evacuees were flown to Dobbins Air Force Base, Cobb Community Transit (CCT) provided transport to various shelter and aid locations in metro Atlanta. CCT also provided free transit vouchers, while our Parks and Recreation Department provided two vans to transport evacuees during their stay.

■ Following severe flooding in July, Cobb County Public Safety spearheaded evacuations of residential areas and the closing of dangerous roads. After the waters receded, we opened a one-stop aid and assistance office where flood victims could apply for state and federal help. Our county employees evaluated the damage done to each affected home and are seeking assistance for the victims.

■ The 20,000-square-foot South Cobb Regional Library, currently

under construction on a 5.6-acre site at the corner of Old Floyd and Clay Roads in south Cobb, is scheduled to open in May. The new library is the third of five regional facilities to be built in the county.

■ Residents were given another way of getting rid of their old computers and electronics besides the trash can. Keep Cobb Beautiful

hosted two free Electronic Recycling Days during the year, collecting more than 190 tons of equipment – including more than 2,700 personal computers and 1,400 televisions. In addition, the Cobb County Transfer Station at County Services Parkway in Marietta now accepts electronic equipment for recycling year-round for a small fee.

■ The Georgia Public Library Service awarded us a \$2,000 Library Services and Technology Act grant to assist with the establishment of a wireless “hot spot” at the Central Library. Users of this service will be able to access the Internet with their personal laptops by signing on with a library card number and PIN.

■ Library cardholders can now sign up to receive email notification that reserved books are available or that materials are overdue. “Courtesy reminder” e-mail notices are also sent before an item is due.



■ Our Library System began offering downloadable audiobooks in December. The initial collection consists of 800 titles, with new titles being added each month. Users can create a free account through the Cobb County Public Library, and download the selected titles directly to any desktop, laptop or to a variety of portable devices with the proper software.

■ The Library System received a \$83,435 maintenance and repair matching grant from the Georgia Public Library Service of the Board of Regents to replace the roof at Merchant's Walk. The grant is to be matched by our Property Management Department.

■ We instituted a 10-year Master Plan to forecast the needs of the county's increasing senior population. The panel of 13 community leaders and five staff members reviewed current practices and services. It made numerous recommendations, including implementing more health and wellness programs, keeping up with changing technology, including social areas in future facilities and educating the public about senior issues.

■ Cobb County's government access channel, TV23, recently pur-

chased a new mobile television production truck. This enables the station to provide more expansive coverage for events throughout the community. We also now have a Department of Public Safety video unit, which prepares educational programs for the public and our employees.

■ TV23 recently completed their upgrade to a new computer-automated program playback system. This improves the overall look and quality of programming while greatly minimizing off-air "down-time" for the channel.

■ Our 4-H Club has 2,205 youth enrolled in the program. This year we added more schools to the program, which now has 22 clubs in schools and after-school locations. 4-H provides leadership development, public speaking opportunities and community service for fifth through 12th grade youth.

■ The Friends of the Library helped to conduct four book sales during the year: two sales at Jim R. Miller Park, a mini-sale at the Central Library and a special sale of collectible books and maps. The sales collected a total of \$55,431, which will be used to purchase new materials and resources for the library system.



Services

■ Our free monthly publication Direction Cobb has transformed into CobbLine, a free bulletin sent to residents through their water bills, e-mailed to subscribers on a weekly basis and updated daily on our Web site cobbcounty.org.

■ Our Web Division made several improvements to our Internet services, including new e-commerce sites for CCT bus passes, Geographic Information Services (GIS) data sales, Keep Cobb Beautiful/Cobb Trees contributions and Meals on Wheels donations. We have a new event calendar, indexes for the video on demand recordings of public meetings and a second 24-hour video stream for live traffic cameras.

■ Information Services reduced our risk of data loss by implementing an enterprise backup system for the county's major computer applications.

■ GIS generated more than \$135,000 in sales of maps and data from the base map of Cobb County on which topography, transportation features, and waterways are located.

■ We have improved data availability through an Enterprise Trans-



portation Network (eTRANS) database. Employees throughout the county can access the database for mapping, computer-aided dispatching and routing purposes.

■ Our Purchasing Department attained its re-certification of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) Outstanding Agency Accreditation Award. Cobb County is one of only 81 governments in North America that have attained this distinction, placing them in the top 3 percent. This award recognizes those agencies that lead the public procurement profession.

■ Extension horticulture and the Cobb County Water System collaborated to install the Rain Garden demonstration project, which promotes utilization of landscape features that help reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality. The Rain Garden is open to the public.

■ Our Senior Services welcomed more than 1,300 to the Information Fair at the Cobb Civic Center in May. The free event made it possible for more than 90 vendors to provide information on finances, Medicare Part D, travel, long term care, Social Security and much

Helping our customers

Cobb County Government

more. Many seniors took the opportunity to create free, confidential living wills while attending.

■ Volunteers with our Senior Services program contributed about 19,400 hours of work during the past year – work that would have otherwise cost the county an estimated \$340,000.

■ Our Information Services Department improved county employees' access to time and attendance records through implementation of a user-friendly, web-based system which allows them to view their records from their PC's or at centrally located time clocks.

■ Information Services also improved the storage and retrieval of documents associated with the construction and maintenance of county buildings by implementing a document imaging system for Property Management.

■ Keep Cobb Beautiful now has a new mascot to help demonstrate to children the importance of protecting the environment. "Detective Kasey B." was recently unveiled to the public sporting the slogan "Litter free for you and me."

■ Sixty-five food service professionals attended the Extension Service ServSafe Manager Certification Training during the past year and 87 percent passed the certification exam. Twenty-four scored 90 or above, qualifying them as ServSafe Instructors. ServSafe is a collaborative effort with the Extension Service, Cobb Douglas Public Health Center for Environmental Health and the Georgia Restaurant Association.



■ Our Purchasing Department was honored by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing for its work with the county Communications Office to provide live broadcasting of bid openings through cable TV and streaming Internet video.

■ We implemented the Vendor Self Service System, allowing those who wish to do business with Cobb County to register their company online. The new system offers standardized product commodity codes, easy access to update vendor information, current solicitations, downloadable forms and access to other purchasing-related information 24-hours a day. It also allows vendors to view pending solicitations and submit bid quotation responses online.

Public Safety

■ Our Department of Public Safety became the first in the state to have its police department, fire department and 911 agency achieve national accreditation. Cobb Police received national law enforcement agency accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) this past year. The Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) awarded Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services accredited status. Cobb 911 was re-accredited by CALEA, after obtaining its initial accreditation in 2002.

■ In 2005, the Neighborhood Safety Commission, in conjunction with Public Safety, organized seven Gang Awareness Seminars. The programs emphasized education about gangs, the importance of the community partnering with government and advice for helping at-risk children.

■ Our departments participated in two full-scale Homeland Security field exercises coordinated by the Cobb Emergency Management Agency at major utility facilities. These real-time exercises tested our ability to cooperate with multiple public and private agencies while responding to large scale emergency incidents.

■ In July, the Fire and Emergency Services Department received a



Uniform protection

new HazMat Tractor with a 31-foot trailer that will be used for regional hazardous materials response. The unit, which is housed at Fire Station 8 in Kennesaw, came with radios, generator and a light tower. The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) awarded the funding to purchase the \$359,300 apparatus.

■ We selected and trained a 12-member Medical Operations Team at Fire Station 10 on Powder Springs Road. The team staffs the department's Medical Operations Vehicle, which can function as a mobile emergency room. The unit can be used for monitoring and treating patients during mass casualty incidents, as well as for transporting patients with infectious diseases.

■ The Board of Commissioners approved the addition of 10 police officer positions for the department as part of the Fiscal Year 2006 budget allocations. The additional manpower will enhance enforcement and community policing strategies within Precinct 2 in the southern portion of the county. Total costs for the additional officers are estimated at \$771,000 including vehicles, equipment and uniforms.

■ We reorganized personnel assigned to the Tactical Unit and the

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Cobb Anti-Gang Enforcement Unit (CAGE) in August by merging the manpower of both units to enhance street gang intelligence gathering and enforcement. This move added eight officers to the gang enforcement effort.

■ Our Public Safety Training Center hosted 17 specialized outside training classes that saved the county an approximate \$265,000. A total of 58,453 hours of training were held at the Training Center for county police officers.

■ We implemented “Roll Call Training” by DVD for our police officers and fire fighters. This method allows first responders to receive training at their work location, rather than requiring them to attend classes that may interfere with their shifts.

■ Our Department of Public Safety conducted two Citizens Public Safety Academy courses to educate community members this past year. These classes allow citizens to gain experience and insight into the challenges firefighters, police officers, and 911 operators face. In addition, Public Safety hosted a self-defense class for women at the facility.



■ We continued to hold joint command staff training for all E911, Police, Fire and Public Safety management staff members to develop professional abilities, communicate important updates and share information. Three separate command staff training classes were held that included attendees from Public Safety, Police, Fire, 911 and the Sheriff's Office.

■ The training staff developed and implemented a new Georgia Mandate Police Officer's Course for department recruits during the year. We trained 180 Cobb County police officers in using patrol rifles. All officers were trained to use weapon mounted tactical lights and were given updated active shooter training.

■ In August, Fire and Emergency Services spent \$150,000 for a 2.4-acre tract of land on Factory Shoals Road in south Cobb for the relocation of Fire Station 9. The construction of the new station is planned for Fiscal Year 2007. The current Fire Station 9 is located on Hillcrest Drive in Austell and was placed in service February 1964.

■ Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services are in the construction phase of a new fire station in Acworth. The new Fire Station 11

Public Safety

will be located at 4550 Cowan Road in Acworth and cost \$1,536,583. The new station is scheduled to open in January. The current station located on Lakewood Drive was placed in service in March 1964.

■ In June the Board of Commissioners authorized the purchase of a new Advance Life Saving Rescue Vehicle for \$175,000 to be housed at Fire Station 11's new location. The addition of an extrication-capable ALS vehicle will assure timely response to emergency calls in this area. The Board of Commissioners also authorized nine additional fire personnel to staff the vehicle.

■ We are in the process of relocating Fire Station 14, which will be built on Library Lane in Marietta. The estimated cost of the relocation will be \$1.7 million. The current Fire Station 14 has been on Sandy Plains Road in Marietta since April 1965.

■ In January the department implemented the Traffic and Criminal Software (TraCS) Application Program, a records management tool designed to track crash incidents within Cobb County and provide data for analysis and an effective response.



Duty and defense

■ Cobb County Animal Control completed the development of the state's first 40-hour Animal Control Training Course. The course is intended as a "basic requirement" for all animal control officers within the state and will be reviewed by the State Agricultural Animal Protection Division as required training certification for all animal control officers.

■ In January the department received two Yamaha, tri-seat "wave runners" for the Underwater Search and Recovery Team. These two vehicles, valued at \$10,000 each, were obtained at no cost to the county through a business program. The wave runners are traded out each year for the latest model.

■ A new Critical Incident Support Vehicle was placed into service in January. The vehicle, a 2005 Farber Command Bus, was purchased for \$119,000 with Homeland Security Office of Domestic Preparedness funds. The vehicle is available for use by the Crisis Negotiation Teams but has proven to be useful in various incidents where a field command post is necessary. The vehicle has been used in homicide cases, road races, hurricane evacuee processing and other incidents.

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■ Our Bomb Response Unit placed into service two bomb response trucks in August and September. The trucks are equipped with the latest bomb response equipment. In addition, a new ANDROS wire-less bomb robot was purchased taking the entire cost package to \$923,000, paid with a Homeland Security Office of Domestic Preparedness grant.

■ The department purchased and placed into service an electronic messaging board in the spring of this year for public information and special events. This self-contained and mobile equipment, obtained at a cost of \$15,000, can be programmed for a multitude of text messages.

■ We made several site improvements at the Training Center, including the paving of a parking lot, additional steps to parking and the construction of a storage building.

■ The \$3.2 million Printrak Computer Aided Dispatch System, deployed in January, enhances a dispatcher's ability to identify the location of callers. Using an Advanced Technical Mapping system, the dispatchers can provide units the shortest route from their location to

an emergency situation. The new mapping system will also provide the latitude and longitude necessary to identify the location of a caller using a cell phone.

■ In the coming year, we expect to connect with the state, City of Atlanta, Fulton and Dekalb Counties as part of the Urban Area Security Initiative to help build a regional communications network for first responders.



■ The \$200,000 Priority One-Emergency Medical Dispatch Protocol provides a triage system to assist 911 operators in assessing emergency medical situations. Coordination between the Cobb County and Marietta Fire Departments, local Police Departments, the Cobb County Medical Director and local ambulance companies establishes appropriate unit response protocols which ensures a safer and efficient dispatch of emergency equipment.

■ We applied for and received Homeland Security grant funds for the purchase of International Talk-Around repeaters (ITAC), configured with two adjoining agencies, Fulton and MARTA, to provide a regional interoperable communications network.

Judicial Services

Protection under the law

■ The Cobb County Sheriff's Office is completing the Automated Victim Notification System (VINE), which will enable Cobb County crime victims to obtain timely information about the custody status of offenders, 24 hours a day – over the telephone, through the Internet or by e-mail. Victims can also register to be notified of an inmate's status change, such as a release or court appearance.

■ In anticipation of the planned jail expansion, the Sheriff and Board of Commissioners hired a firm to update the Master Jail Plan to define growth issues for the next 10-15 years. The study projected bed needs and provided a preliminary design and cost model for the expansion of the facility.

■ Changes at the Adult Detention Center this past year included replacement of the roof on the oldest building and replacement of a worn out kitchen and laundry equipment.

■ The Sheriff's Office made security enhancements a priority within the Judicial Complex in Marietta this past year. The improvements included enhancements to the perimeter screening systems and expansion of the video surveillance system. These measures, and other changes awaiting funding, will make the courthouse safer

for the public, employees, prosecutors and judges.

■ The Sheriff's Office and our Public Safety Department have developed new custom identification cards which use 3D technology to prevent them from being duplicated. The cards are used in accessing high security areas within county buildings.



■ The District Attorney's office expanded into redesigned and renovated areas of their building at 10 East Park Square in Marietta. Additionally, a more appropriate meeting facility was created for Cobb County's grand jurors. When available, that space is also used for meetings and educational programs.

■ The Office of the Solicitor General underwent an estimated \$230,000 renovation and relocation project beginning in February. Due to a fifth Division II judgeship added to the Cobb State Court, the Solicitor's Office was relocated to the third floor of 10 East Park Square. We gained an additional 2,000-square-feet to allow for five new personnel to serve the needs of a new courtroom. Property Management saved an estimated \$45,000 to \$50,000 using inmate labor.

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■ In August, Magistrate Court began conducting “no bond” hearings via video conference to the Adult Detention Center, thus saving time and reducing security risks. At the same time, Magistrate Court began placing the no bond hearing calendars on its Web site for the convenience of the public.

■ In April, Magistrate Court implemented the RoboCuff Electronic Voice Monitoring System to assist pretrial officers with court-ordered supervision. The device uses integrated voice recognition, biometric speaker authentication and Web technology.

■ The Cobb County District Attorney’s Office added a special prosecutor for financial crimes such as identity theft and real estate mortgage fraud.

■ In May, the Board of Commissioners changed county ordinances concerning animal ownership, care and cruelty. The ordinance related to vicious and biting dogs was modified to allow for more effective adjudication. This five-year project was supported and assisted by the Cobb County Attorney’s Office, the Animal Control Board and the Magistrate Court of Cobb County.



■ Our State Court Clerk’s Office received a grant to purchase digital video recorders, which will provide added security for the \$33 million processed annually by the department.

■ The State Court Clerk’s Office upgraded the technology used to view the court’s older civil and criminal records, providing more efficient access and more legible documents.

■ Magistrate Court implemented an e-filing system, which now allows attorneys and citizens to answer small claims and dispossessory actions online.

■ Juvenile Court, working with the Cobb and Marietta City Schools, devised a program to deal with truant elementary school students through their parents. After a school social worker files a complaint, a hearing is held with the child’s parents and the case is scheduled for mediation 30 days later. If the child has no absences during that time, the case is dismissed.

■ All real estate records from 1977 forward are online and our Clerk of Superior Court is working to put court information online. It is also researching the preservation of records and books dating from 1864.

Transportation

Roads to progress

■ Our Department of Transportation (DOT) has started a two-year effort to create a Long Range Comprehensive Transportation Plan. The County included all six of the local municipalities to provide their input. In addition, we hosted a Walkable Communities Workshop focused on pedestrian-friendly developments and alternative transportation to help plan for the future of transportation in the County.

■ As a part of Cobb DOT's continuing efforts to relieve congestion and improve safety, we are continuing design and construction for many projects. These include replacing the Atlanta Road Bridge over the Chattahoochee River, Roswell Road widening from SR120 Loop to Bridgegate Drive, Roswell Road at SR120 Loop Interchange improvements, operational improvements at intersections along Mars Hill Road, safety improvements at intersections on Austell Road and assistance with widening Abernathy Road/Johnson Ferry from the Chattahoochee River to Roswell Road.

■ We are improving four intersections along the Terrell Mill Road corridor that will result in reduced commute times for travelers between east Cobb and the Interstate 75/Powers Ferry Road area.



■ Cobb County DOT Operations is completing a three year program for retiming all traffic signals county-wide to improve travel times. As a part of our efforts, we have implemented Georgia's first adaptive traffic signal control system. The new system counts vehicles approaching the intersections and makes decisions on changes in the signal timing to adjust to differing volumes and demand. Phase One is complete

and includes 15 intersections south of Interstate 285 on Paces Ferry Road. Phase Two began in September and includes 54 intersections in the Cumberland/Galleria area.

■ Our Traffic Signal Maintenance section addressed approximately 4,700 call reports and work orders during 2005. Our Road Maintenance section generated approximately 5,800 work orders in 2005, of which 94 percent have been completed.

■ Cobb County DOT Utilities issued 828 utility permits with an average turn-around time of seven to ten days. These permits generated fees totaling approximately \$140,000 and is an important tool to monitor work that affects the County's roadways and infrastructure.

■ For the third year in a row, Cobb County Community Transit (CCT)

reached a ridership record with an 11 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2004, with ridership exceeding 3.7 million trips. Replacing the last nine local buses, all of CCT's local fleet is now comprised of modern low-floor design buses, further improving comfort and reliability.

■ CCT entered into a new five-year service contract with the fixed route operating rate at \$1.50 per hour less than the previous agreement. This will result in a 12-month savings of more than \$200,000 helping to offset the recent rise in fuel costs.

■ CCT also changed the paratransit provisions to charge on the basis of per trip rather than per revenue hour, resulting in savings to the County of more than \$24,000 during the first four months under the new contract.

■ We ordered eight new paratransit replacement buses and nine express replacement buses. The new express buses will be larger coaches, 45 feet in length with a capacity of 57 passengers, and will address current express bus overcrowding.

■ CCT added two new express routes. Route 470 provides service from Hiram and the Silver Comet Trail Park and Ride lot to downtown

Atlanta, and Route 480 provides service from the Acworth Park and Ride lot to downtown Atlanta.

■ In a continuing effort to improve safety and services at McCollum Airport, our Aviation Division completed construction on the 950 feet of runway extension, upgrading the runway safety overrun to Federal Aviation Administration standards. We extended the South Parallel Taxiway 950 feet to join the new runway end and constructed 32 new aircraft parking spaces, including T-hangar spaces.

■ Our Development Review staff has reviewed more than 200 zoning cases, 411 sets of development plans, 220 final plats and 31 annexations. We have worked with the development community to mitigate transportation system impacts and estimate annual contributions made by developers for public improvements total more than \$5 million.

■ We initiated the Major Thoroughfare Study to help improve safety and operations along Cobb County roads. This ongoing study has been completed for 15 road segments (analyzing nearly 790 crashes covering 35 miles of road) and collected data for 15 other locations.



Recreation

Fun in the sun

■ The South Cobb Aquatic Center opened in July. It features a 130,000 gallon pool with zero depth entry. The pool has water spray stations and geysers, a “lazy river” and a 150-foot water slide. Swim lessons, open swim, water exercise classes, lap swimming, family swim sessions and lifeguard classes are some of the many opportunities offered to the public at the new facility. The pool was constructed with a Community Development Block Grant of \$2.8 million dollars.

■ Our Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department hosted the annual Special Olympics Winter Games for a record 13th consecutive year. More than 600 athletes competed in various athletic events.

■ Our county tennis program hosted the United States Tennis Association (USTA) National 16’s Open for the fourth consecutive year, drawing many of the top 16 and under tennis players from around the country. The tennis program also hosted seven state championship tournaments, the Georgia Tennis Association Super Championship tournament, the Georgia Games State Championships, and 24 other USTA sanctioned tournament events.

■ In conjunction with USTA-Georgia, the Cobb Tennis Centers held

the “Tennis in the Park” tennis festival that introduced tennis to nearly 400 players. Each student received free tennis rackets and participated in a free tennis clinic. Many of these students continued with lessons throughout the summer.



■ Harrison Tennis Center in northeast Cobb is the home of more Atlanta Lawn Tennis Association (ALTA) and USTA league teams than any other facility in the Atlanta area. In 2005, Harrison was the home for 268 ALTA and USTA league teams.

■ We play other games as well. Our spring/summer and fall softball program is the largest in the state with a total of 598 teams and a total registration of 10,764 players.

■ Special events continue to grow with new programs added each year. We held our first free Family Fun Fest in April, attracting several thousand people to Marietta Square. Annual events such as the Candy Cane Hunt, Egg Hunt, Fall Festival of Fun, and Dinner with Santa continue to be very popular and keep growing. These events not only allow entire families to attend but enhance community outreach and involvement.

Cobb County Government

■ Our athletic unit offered three new programs to Cobb County residents – an adult kickball league, winter men’s flag football, and a fall coed flag football league.

■ We conducted the Amateur Softball Association 14 and Under Girls Class B National Championship with 31 teams and a men’s Modified Fast-Pitch National Championship with 18 teams at Lost Mountain Park.

■ We purchased more than 40 acres of additional park property in west Cobb at a cost of \$480,000. Plans are to develop this acreage into a soccer complex. An additional 15 acres was purchased for a passive park in south Cobb at a cost of \$450,000, using greenspace funds.

■ In June, the Mable House Amphitheatre was renamed the Mable House Barnes Amphitheatre to honor the contributions made to the community by the Barnes family. We also made Cultural Affairs a separate division within the Parks and Recreation Department this past year, reflecting the arts growing influence.



■ Kids in the Gallery, a visual art class created for Ministries United for Service and Training (MUST), received state recognition by the Georgia Assembly of Community Arts Agencies. This program, which provides art instruction for underprivileged children, is funded by a grant through the Georgia Council for the Arts.

■ We installed 12 playgrounds throughout the park system from monies received through a program utilizing cell tower revenues. The playgrounds were installed at Sweat Mountain, Shaw, Bells Ferry, Sandy Plains, Kennworth, Tramore, Lost Mountain, Clarkdale, Rhyne, Nickajack, Wallace and Thompson Parks.

■ Our aquatics staff received a state Innovative Program Award for a public service announcement produced in conjunction with TV23 and the American Red Cross. The public service announcement covered swimming pool water safety, giving what precautions one should take, including knowing the facilities and operations before allowing children or adults to swim.

Water and Environment

Drinking from the fountain

■ The state honored Cobb for its water stewardship, designating the county as one of only six WaterFirst communities in Georgia. The title brings with it reduced interest rates for water and sewer project loans as well as improved chances for Community Development Block Grants and Regional Assistance Program Grants.

■ The American Society of Civil Engineers selected the \$113 million, 9.5-mile long Chattahoochee Tunnel Project as civil engineering achievement of the year. The 18-foot diameter tunnel now serves as the primary wastewater conveyance for most of east Cobb.

■ The nation's top three credit rating agencies, Moody's, Standard and Poor's and Fitch ICBA, each gave Cobb County Water System "Triple A" ratings for its revenue bonds for the fourth year in a row.

■ The Northwest Water Reclamation Facility was selected as national treatment plant of the year in its size category by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

■ In January 2005, the Cobb Water System became the official utility provider for the City of Kennesaw. In December the county bought the city's water and sewer operations for \$12 million. Residents have

received the same high-quality service from Cobb County Water System that they did from the City of Kennesaw.

■ We completed a \$67 million project for the Noonday Creek Water Reclamation Facility. This will result in the upgrade and expansion of the Noonday Creek Water Reclamation Facility from 12 to 20 million gallons per day, allowing it to continue to serve a growing northeast portion of the county.

■ We also continued expansion of the Northwest Water Reclamation Facility. These expansions will result in a total wastewater treatment capacity of 132 million gallons a day – projected to be sufficient for our needs through 2030.

■ Keep Cobb Beautiful was honored for its superior environmental efforts with three national awards, including a first place affiliate award, given by the Keep America Beautiful program in December. Two months previously, Keep Georgia Beautiful also presented the Cobb organization three first place awards – the affiliate award for populations over 500,000, waste reduction and recycling and the award for environmental improvement.



■ Once again, the Georgia Water and Pollution Control Association honored our Water System with numerous awards, including two Plant of the Year awards for the operation of the Northwest and South Cobb Water Reclamation Facilities.

■ The state Environmental Protection Division presented our Adopt-A-Stream program with its Outstanding Watershed Award in April to honor our protection of waterways.

■ The Cobb County Water System has the second lowest, typical combined water and wastewater monthly bill of 11 comparable utilities in the metro Atlanta region.

■ Keep Cobb Beautiful, through its program Cobb Trees, arranged the planting of at least 1,172 trees at various locations and parks throughout the county. More than 460 program volunteers donated about 1,844 hours of their time, which could have otherwise cost the county \$12,682.

■ We hosted the third annual Cool Waters Conference, a workshop designed for Georgia educators grades K-12. Several state and local

organizations work jointly to offer this learning opportunity.

■ Our customer accounts grew by nearly 3,000 to a new total of 169,000. On average, 63 million gallons of water are distributed daily to customers through 3,000 miles of water mains. Our combined 5,700 miles of water and sewer mains is more than the distance from Atlanta to Anchorage, Alaska.



■ We selected the consultant for design of the South Cobb Tunnel and Lift Station. The design elements of this project, at an estimated value of \$143 million, include 30,000 feet of 24-foot diameter tunnel, a 100 MGD wet well/dry pit influent lift station at South Cobb Water Reclamation Facility and approximately 4,000 feet of 72-inch gravity sewer. We anticipate construction to begin in 2007.

■ We continued enhancement of the Hansen computerized maintenance management system, leading to future web-based and mobile applications for office and field crews. We installed laptop computers in four crew vehicles so our employees can have immediate access to water and wastewater infrastructure information.



Remarks from the County Manager

David Hankerson
County Manager

Cobb County has faced many challenges this past year. In each case, we overcame them without sacrificing the quality of our services to the public.

Rising fuel costs, severe storm damages and providing for evacuees from Hurricane Katrina have been challenges we met head-on with a commitment to doing the best job possible. Instead of making budget cuts to meet these needs, the Board of Commissioners was able to keep our finances steady through good planning.

This careful management is illustrated by the fact that we have gone more than a decade without raising our millage rates. Our stability is also reflected in that we have consistently maintained our three "Triple A" national bond ratings during that time.

We are constantly preparing to deal with any crisis. During the past year, we continued to consolidate our Emergency Management services. All our agencies train together regularly during mock exercises and field trials, which we use to improve our response to the real thing. By having a central command for Emergency Management, we ensure

that all the county's resources are working at maximum efficiency during times of crisis.

The new Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and our judicious use of homeland security grants, will allow us to continue to upgrade the tools we employ during times of crisis.

Most importantly, our greatest asset is our county employees. Their outstanding training and customer service is what sets Cobb County apart from other local governments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hankerson".



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Cobb County...Expect the Best!